



PROFILES IN ADVOCACY –
HOW FIRM HAS MOVED LEGISLATORS ON IMMIGRATION REFORM
July 2013

PURPLE DISTRICT STRATEGY – MOVING A LEGISLATOR IN A DISTRICT WITH CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Congressman Peter King (R), NY

Peter King has served for 11 terms in a predominantly white, Republican district in Long Island. He has traditionally held conservative views on immigration and national security issues. However, as a result of redistricting in 2012, the demographics of his district have shifted, such that now approximately one third of his constituents include people of color, folks living in poverty and an increasing number who identify as Democrats.¹

To move Congressman King, Make the Road NY adopted a strategy of constructive engagement with consistent constituent pressure. They recognized that King had been behaving more like a pragmatist recently and had bucked his party on numerous occasions in the past six months. Cognizant of the fact that he reacts very badly to being publicly shamed, they avoided that. Though they knew he would never abandon a border security focus, they also knew there was room for him to maintain that focus and still support a path to citizenship.

Make the Road NY engaged Congressman King and his staff early, while elevating the issue locally, with the implicit threat of shaming action should he stray. They held several public events in his district (see below), generating dozens of items in the media.² They also collected over 1,000 postcards in support of CIR and directed hundreds of calls to his office. Coalition

¹ The district went from being 87% White; 7% latino and 2% African American to 66% White, 20% Latino and 9% African American.

² Among the events organized were a voter registration Press Conference; Statewide Bus Tour Launch; Brentwood Forum with King; Mother's Day Action; Canvass of ~6,500 voters in his district, asking them to take action (postcards and/or calls); Ongoing postcard collection and at least two CIR call-in days; Ongoing voter registration—registered over 700 voters in his district; Long Island Poll Release (poll data sent to all LI targets); Father's Day Deportation Vigil and a Press Conference to Celebrate Senate Vote and Demand House Action.

allies also engaged in constituent pressure—Long Island Jobs with Justice submitted 1,000 letters from congregations to his office.

The result was King's declaration that he was open to a pathway to citizenship if border provisions were sufficient. On May 30, Congressman King attended a forum at the Brentwood Public Library that was hosted by the NAACP; Make the Road NY and the Long Island Civic Engagement Table. The purpose of the forum was to provide the opportunity for Congressman King to engage with communities of color. It was there that King first expressed his public support for S.744. An article in the *wall Street Journal* tells the story of his changing views, of the forum, and is posted on his Congressional website! <http://peteking.house.gov/media-center/in-the-news/in-altered-long-island-district-rep-peter-king-learns-ropes-demographics-of> In order to sustain momentum, less than two weeks later immigration advocates and supporters, including Make the Road NY, SEIU, clergy and held a press conference in Long Island announcing the results of a poll conducted by Harstad Research that revealed that approximately 80% of voters in Long Island supported immigration reform.³



³ <http://www.longislandpress.com/2013/06/12/long-island-immigration-reform-proponents-encouraged/>



Peter King at the Brentwood immigration forum hosted by MRNY, NAACP and the Long Island Civic Engagement Table May 30, 2013.

Congressman King continues to express support for immigration reform. A recent quote in Newsday suggests he continues to move in the right direction: “Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford) signaled compromise, saying that since ‘security provisions of the bill have been strengthened and improved,’ he hopes the House would consider immigration reform this session.”

Make the Road NY will continue to push him immediately to get him to help move others in the House to take action on CIR. An allied interfaith coalition met with Rep. King on July 1, and the MRNY group is planning to meet with him again in July.

CREATING A CHAMPION – CONVERTING A SENATOR FROM SUPPORTER TO CHAMPION

Senator Richard Blumenthal

Immigration reform efforts in CT (both state and federal) have been spearheaded by the Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance (“CIRA”) a coalition of approximately 50 state based immigrant rights organizations. Within CIRA, member JUNTA for Progressive Action has been responsible for coordinating the advocacy work around federal legislation.

Early in the year, CCC reached out to Senator Blumenthal’s office to discuss ways to engage the Senator in the legislative efforts. CCC was subsequently invited to attend a meeting on immigration reform with the Senator and faith based leaders. At that meeting, CCC laid out a series of asks of the Senator, including that he consider being a champion on immigration reform efforts in the state and the Senate and work to advance progressive amendments. The

Senator at the time stated his support for immigration reform efforts and said that he would consider the requests made of him.

Subsequent to that meeting, CIRA began to meet on a weekly basis to strategize on ways to engage the CT delegation to support reform. A strategy was deployed, which largely focused on grassroots mobilization including constituent visits, press conferences, rallies and community forums.

The first indication that Senator Blumenthal would emerge as a true champion was an April 2 press conference that he convened in New Haven, CT, where he stated his strong support for comprehensive immigration reform.⁴ Two days later, advocates met with the Senator to discuss the status of the legislation. Advocates again emphasized their desire that he become a champion and presented him with a list of amendments for him to consider introducing during mark-up (he serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee). At that meeting he announced that immigration reform was one of his top two legislative priorities. Subsequently, Senator Blumenthal began to host public events in CT to engage with constituents on the issue of immigration reform.

After the introduction of S. 744, advocates again met with Senator Blumenthal and reviewed the list of specific amendments supported by FIRM and CIRA. He agreed to introduce all of the amendments on the list except for family reunification (which he said he would support but stated that they were already being led by Senator Hirono⁵).

During the judiciary committee process, Blumenthal introduced 22 progressive amendments of which 11 passed. Throughout mark-up the Senator and his staff were in regular touch with CCC and CIRA. Such was the extent of his leadership efforts to improve the bill, that after it was voted favorably out of committee, America's Voice emailed an action alert asking advocates to "send[] Blumenthal some love today". According to the action alert:

With Connecticut's Senator Richard Blumenthal's leadership, the Senate Judiciary Committee last week voted to send the immigration bill with a pathway to citizenship to the full Senate for a vote. Thanks to Senator Blumenthal, we're one step closer to reform! Please call Sen. Blumenthal's office at (202) 224-2823 and tell him that we appreciate his work on immigration reform....

Sen. Blumenthal has defended the Senate's immigration bill from harmful amendments that would have weakened or destroyed the path to citizenship. Senator Blumenthal also introduced edits to allow undocumented immigrants serving in the Armed Forces to qualify for citizenship faster, and to restrict immigration raids at schools, churches, and hospitals. While the bill isn't perfect, Sen. Blumenthal helped make it better.... Let's

⁴ http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/immigration_push/

⁵ These included shortening the path to citizenship, changing the date of eligibility to the date the bill was introduced, supporting the right of return for deportees.

thank him for his support and ask him to defend the pathway to citizenship during the full Senate vote.

CIRA and CCC continued to engage with Senator Blumenthal and his staff. He put forth affirmative amendments on the Senate floor while carefully avoiding any actions that would have derailed the efforts to advance the bill. He spoke out forcefully and passionately about the need for reform – at public forums, during press conferences, and on the Senate floor, while checking in regularly with advocates. After passage of the bill in the Senate, he held a press conference on June 28, where he urged advocates to continue their fight in the House of Representatives and pledged to remain involved.



Senator Blumenthal, advocates and immigrant families at a press conference at JUNTA on June 28 where he was thanked for his role as a champion for immigration reform.

ORGANIZING A STATEWIDE FRAMEWORK TO MOVE CONSERVATIVES

One America and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. (ICIRR)

One America

OneAmerica and ICIRR's are stand-outs among FIRM groups leveraging outside support through years of meticulous engagement and relationship building with businesses and conservatives.

OneAmerica is the invisible "hand in the glove" of the Washington Compact, which is a basic statement of support for CIR but framed in conservative values. They staff the work on the

Compact and use it to engage in substantive and authentic conversations with GOP members in the state. They have also used their relationships with growers to move the needle on immigration reform.

One America's work to secure support from Congressman Reichart is an example of this type of engagement. In late March, One America facilitated a meeting with the Congressman, who is a Republican. In attendance were representatives from the Washington Growers League, Stemilt Growers, Stemilt Ag Services, the former Washington State GOP Chairman and a representative from One America. At the meeting, the Congressman was briefed on the Washington Compact. Growers then spoke about the importance of CIR to the agricultural community involvement, why the agriculture community is on board and of the need for workers to have legal status and access to benefits including housing, health care and social security.

After acknowledging the Congressman's unique ability to be a lead in his party around CIR and after emphasizing the urgency of the moment, One America provided background information about the bill and talked about polls showing the broad support amongst Americans for immigration reform. Reichart then spoke, stating that he recognized that the system was broken and that immigration reform was needed, adding that "I'm with you and I'll do anything you want me to do. I don't see any disagreements with FIRM policies". A discussion ensued about ways to engage Republican elected officials on the issue. Finally, Reichart suggested that the group talk to Congressman Greg Walden from Oregon to ensure he is on board with CIR and understands core principles.



Meeting with Congressman Reichart.

ICIRR

ICIRR's work to organize the business community in Illinois led to the creation and April launching of the Illinois Business Immigration Coalition, which includes large corporate titans of Chicago who acknowledge difficulty in filling high and low skills jobs in the state and advocate for passage of comprehensive immigration reform legislation as a solution. Some of

these titans know that their self-interest in high-skilled visas is tied to that of a comprehensive bill; others are dyed in the wool Republicans who see the peril ahead for the party. Among the members of the Coalition are Motorola, Caterpillar, the Chicago Chamber of Commerce, Liberty Mutual Insurance and Baker & McKenzie. The coalition's aim is to recruit 300 CEO's and 1,000 small businesses.



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, left, and Caterpillar CEO Doug Oberhelman, center, listen as Pat Magoon, CEO of Lurie Children's Hospital speaks at the launch event for The Illinois Business Immigration Coalition on Monday. (source: Associated Press).

The efforts to create the IBIC continue to yield fruit in unexpected ways. On June 10, under the auspices of the business coalition, ICIRR met with Congressman Aaron Shock, a rising star in the GOP. Shortly after the meeting took place, he delivered a speech at the City Club of Chicago and endorsed 1) a comprehensive approach to immigration reform; 2) changing the status of the 11 million; 3) and said that his constituents were demanding it. The video of the speech is below - the immigration portion is around 18:00. <http://vimeo.com/68108541>

MOVING AND ENGAGING FIRST TERM LEGISLATORS

Senator Dean Heller, NV

PLAN Nevada and Mi Familia Vota spearheaded the efforts to engage Senator Heller, a first term Republican from Nevada who had in the past adopted some hard line positions on immigration. When advocates met with Senator Heller early in the efforts, he encouraged them to press him publicly and raise the specter of the Latino vote – and they did!! The winning solution to securing his support for reform was a combination of sustained grassroots advocacy

often led by immigrants and Latinos, and direct engagement, including phone banking, rallies, press conferences and meetings with the Senator. Examples of this include:

January 28 public launching of Keeping Families Together Campaign and subsequent grassroots events in February aimed at creating momentum for immigration reform.

A March 5 meeting with Senator Heller and family members participating in FIRM's *Keeping Families Together* bus tour.

March 12 - phone banking efforts that targeted the Senator.

March 16 - immigrant rights rally was held in support of immigration reform

By March 26, Senator Heller began to publicly articulate a position on reform. In a speech delivered to the state legislature, he called for legislators to find “common ground” on immigration. After his speech, he received a basket of Easter eggs full of the stories of immigrants from DREAMer Astrid Silva.

March 29 - **Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada** delivered Good Friday Easter baskets to Congressmen Heller, Horsford and Heck in Nevada. In the baskets were personal stories from undocumented and immigrant Nevadans.



Easter basket delivery to Senator Heller

April 2 - **PLAN** Nevada, Mi Familia Vota, SEIU, the Culinary Union and NCLR led the Latino Leadership Council's effort to pass a resolution calling on Congress to pass CIR at the Clark

County Commission. This was the first such resolution from a Nevada government entity and was passed unanimously.

May 1 - PLAN organized an Las Vegas May Day March for Citizenship with AFL-CIO, Mi Familia Vota, APALA, NAFFA, NCLR, Yo Soy 132, Laborers Union, Carpenters Union, MEChA UNLV, Hermandad Mexicana, Clark County Education Association, We Are Nevada, SEIU, and Steelworkers Union.

On May 26, Senator Heller published an op-ed piece in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* calling for a bipartisan solution to the nation's broken immigration system. Two days later, Numbers USA launched paid TV ads in Nevada attacking Senator Heller.

On May 29, PLAN, Nevada attended an immigration round table Las Vegas, where they met up with Senator Heller and delivered letters from immigrant and undocumented Nevadans urging that he support reform.

On June 13, a press conference was held announcing the results of a poll commissioned by the Alliance for Citizenship, Partnership for A New American Economy and Republicans for Immigration Reform revealing majority support for S.744.

Finally, on June 26, Senator Heller spoke on the Senate floor in support of S. 744 PLAN Nevada and Mi Familia Vota.

CULTIVATING POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS IN THE HOUSE

Congressman David Valadao, CA

David Valadao is a Republican congressman who has represented California's 21st district since 2013. He is the son of Portuguese immigrants. He won the elections in a heavily Latino district (72%) that had long been held by Democrats. He is perceived to be a "new breed" of GOP, one who has been very responsive to the Latino population and farm workers, and the issues they confront.

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) began its engagement efforts with Congressman Valadao in March 2013, as part of the "Keeping Families Together" ("KFT") Bus Tour. During the bus tour, constituent families met with the Congressman, shared their stories and asked that he support immigration reform legislation that would keep families together and provide a pathway to citizenship.

CHIRLA then assigned an organizer, Diana Colin to work on cultivating Congressman Valadao. The strategy has consisted of a combination of deep constituent engagement, movement building trainings to create new leaders in his district and advancing local elements

of the KFT campaign. In addition, CHIRLA's legislative staffer, Rita Medina, and Executive Director Angelica Salas have met with Congressman Valado and/or his DC chief of staff every time that they have traveled to D.C. , keeping him and his senior staff abreast of critical issues pertaining to immigration reform legislation.

In June, CHIRLA's movement building team launched intense community outreach efforts targeting Valadao's district, starting with individuals already involved in CHIRLA but quickly expanding to new individuals. In one month, they collected 400 pledge cards by engaging constituents outside supermarkets, flea markets, and door to door canvassing targeting small towns in the district, including Pixley, Delano, and Leemore. In addition, CHIRLA organized legislative visits every Friday during the month of June, where different stories of immigrant families were shared. On Father's day, cards from constituent children asking Congressman Valadao to keep families together were delivered along with pledge cards and CHIRLA's principles.

Since Valadao's office has been very receptive to constituency engagement, CHIRLA has worked closely with the staff, and have already met with the district director 4 times. On June 28, the movement building team attended the "coffee and donuts with your congressman" event, and it was at this event that the Congressman detailed questions regarding immigration and a pathway to citizenship and also agreed to do a public event with his constituents.

Earlier this week, the movement building team met with Congressman Valadao, asking him for a public statement in support of immigration reform and his attendance at an event with immigrant families in the district. Rep. Valadao agreed!



CHIRLA meeting with Congressman Valadao in his district, June 29, 2013.

CULTIVATING REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Congressman Paul Ryan, WI

Prior to 2006, Congressman Ryan supported the House versions of the Kennedy-McCain immigration reform bill as well as the DREAM Act. In 2006, he shifted dramatically to the hard right on immigration reform, co-sponsoring Sensenbrenner's draconian HR 4437. It was known at that time that Ryan was a rising star in the Republican Party, and this shift represented a national Republican Party hard-line on immigration, leading up to Ryan's position as a running mate to Mitt Romney's "self-deportation" platform in the 2012 election.

Since then, Congressman Ryan has returned to his pro-immigrant stance. Among the key factors that have influenced his decision are the following:

Organizing Latino voters and low-turnout voters in his district. Ryan's congressional district has the second largest Latino population in the State of Wisconsin, and represents a growing Latino electorate as opposed to an aging and older conservative electorate. Voces de la Frontera and its youth arm, YES has organized in African American and Latino neighborhoods in the City of Racine aggressively since 2004, culminating in increased voter participation over the years and a reversal of a historic trend in 2012—with a majority urban voters outvoting traditional suburban voters. Voces' activities in Ryan's district have led to a series of right-wing attacks on Voces' GOTV work in 2011 and 2012, a recognition of its successful efforts to change the balance of power in the US State Senate in that district during the recall elections.

Voces' c4 arm organized Latinos in Kenosha, (a Ryan district) during the recall elections, and in collaboration with SEIU, contributed to the successful defense of a state senator who was under attack during a counter-recall election challenge. In doing this work, Voces recognized that there was a vacuum of information and organizing, especially in the organizing of Latino voters.

Public Challenges to Ryan's anti-civil rights agenda. Voces de la Frontera shifted its stance -- from appealing and lobbying Congressman Ryan to exposing his shameful position, organizing very visible actions that brought attention to his record.⁶ For example, Voces organized a sit-in at his congressional office with a rally of supporters outside when he refused to support the DREAM Act. Through social media, Voces promoted stories such as when a Racine teacher and Voces board member publicly refused to accept a civil rights award from Congressman Ryan, physically turned his back at the awards ceremony, and called Ryan out on his civil rights record. (The video of the event was shared thousands of times and the story was picked up by

⁶ Petition delivery to Ryan's office: <http://americasvoiceonline.org/blog/wisconsin-immigrant-rights-group-voces-de-la-frontera-delivers-7226-petitions-to-paul-ryan-over-anchor-babies-comment/>

mainstream media). Voces organized a protest against Ryan's meeting with the hate group FAIR in DC, which resulted in Ryan distancing himself publicly from FAIR.⁷

The carrot and the stick approach: Since Congressman Ryan's reversal on immigration and subsequent advocacy for reform, Voces has been generating "thank you" calls for the Congressman, for example thanking him for his favorable vote on the Violence Against Women Act, and calling on him to continue to lead the nation on immigration reform. Voces has also been meeting with the Congressman on an ongoing basis, have continued to take the time to thank him publicly for his support for a path to citizenship, and will continue to work to shore up his support.

⁷ Ryan distances himself from FAIR: <http://www.citizenorange.com/orange/2009/10/students-force-rep-paul-ryan-t.html>